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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
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PARIS ALSO FOR POL
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media highlighted Acting PM Ehud Olmert's coalition-forming efforts and the emerging Kadima-Labor partnership. Major media reported that Olmert has told Labor Party Chairman Amir Peretz that Yisrael Beiteinu would be a member of the next government. Leading media wrote that Olmert made the statement in secret meetings, during which it was decided that Labor would join the coalition as the senior partner. The media quoted sources in Labor and Kadima as saying that Peretz would be appointed defense minister, and that Labor would also be given the education portfolio. In its lead story, Yediot quoted associates of Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying that handing over the defense portfolio to Peretz is an irresponsible act, as the associates believe that Peretz's expected requests for cuts in the defense budget would be badly informed. IDF Radio and Israel Radio said that Mofaz told Peretz that the reports do not reflect his opinion, were made without his knowledge and noted that he is convinced that none of his close associates had uttered them. Major media reported that Tourism Minister Abraham Hirschson is the most likely candidate for finance minister, if the post is held by Kadima.

Israel Radio cited Palestinian PM Mahmoud Zahar's denial of reports that he recognized Israel and its right to exist. Leading media had reported that Zahar wrote UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, referring to a "two-state solution" for the Middle East and to the Palestinians' hope to "live in peace and security... side by side with our neighbors in this sacred part of the world." Ha'aretz reported that Hamas is struggling to unite its local ranks and its leadership abroad. Ha'aretz reported that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's adviser Osama El Baz told the newspaper that Egypt is recommending that Hamas and Palestinian PM Ismail Haniyeh stop the "violence" -- terror against Israel. Yediot and other media quoted the PA's FM, Mahmoud Zahar, as saying on Tuesday that the Chinese government has invited him to visit Beijing in May. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Tuesday, Lu Jing, the spokesman of the Chinese Embassy to Israel, issued a denial of the report. Yediot quoted PA Interior Minister Said Siam as saying on Tuesday that he is responsible for the security forces, not PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas. This morning, Israel Radio quoted Abbas as saying that the National Security Service -- the most important force in the PA -- will remain under his sole control and responsibility.

Ha'aretz quoted senior GOI sources in Jerusalem as saying on Tuesday that Israel does not intend to resume the transfer of tax money it levies on the PA's behalf, and that it is not looking for indirect channels to do so.

Ha'aretz cited various reports, according to which 10 terror operatives, who the London-based Al-Hayat said

have infiltrated the Gaza Strip, belong to several factions -- mainly radical Islamic movements in Egypt, that are affiliated with Al-Qaida. They allegedly include citizens of Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen. Ha'aretz wrote that some of the reports could not be fully verified by Israeli authorities.

Major media reported that on Tuesday, one Palestinian was killed and eight others were wounded, including a mother and her 6-month-old baby, in a series of IDF attacks throughout the Gaza Strip in response to Qassam rocket fire into Israel. Major media reported that a Qassam landed close to a chemical tanker in Ashkelon. Leading media reported that the IDF bombarded the PA's presidential complex in Gaza. Ha'aretz reported that a 13-year-old Palestinian boy was killed by IDF troops north of Jerusalem. Israel Radio reported that an IDF officer was wounded, and that two Palestinian militants -- one from Islamic Jihad, the other from the PFLP -- were arrested in Nablus.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Israel Prisons Service (IPS) confirmed on Tuesday that it was holding a Saudi Arabian national -- identified as Abdel Rahman El-Attawi -- who was caught close to a year ago illegally residing in Israel. The newspaper quoted IPS officials as saying that El-Attawi was not held on terror-related charges. The Jerusalem Post quoted Saudi FM Prince Saud as saying earlier on Tuesday that his country was in touch with international agencies to obtain el-Attawi's release.

Yediot reported that after four years of preparations, two Israelis -- Dudu Yifrah and Micha Yaniv -- and one Palestinian -- Ali Bushnak -- are leaving within the next few days to climb Mt. Everest. The newspaper said that the two promised yesterday that they would do everything in their power to help each other make history and place Israeli and Palestinian flags on Mt. Everest. Yediot wrote that American mountain climber Lance Trumbull came up with the idea as a way to demonstrate human cooperation. The expedition will also include representatives of the Christian, Hindu and Buddhist faiths.

Maariv reported that 30-year-old Dr. Shany Blum, an Israeli physician from the Technion, won the American College of Cardiologists' annual young researcher award.

Yediot reported that the American company Transaction Systems (NASDAQ:TSAI) has started negotiations to purchase the Israeli company Fundtech for USD 200-220 million.

Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Assistance to the Hamas-controlled PA -- certainly not; however neither should we stand idly by in the face of the humanitarian disaster that has fallen on an uninvolved and innocent population."

Palestinian affairs correspondent and far-left Palestinian sympathizer Amira Hass opined in Ha'aretz: "The supporters of convergence and its architects are deceiving themselves by thinking that [Palestinian] rage won't burst out." Conservative columnist and former Director General of the Israel Broadcasting Authority Uri Porat sarcastically wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "After it was definitely proved that the mighty Israel Defense Forces isn't worth anything against some insignificant Qassam rocket launchers, there's no doubt that only someone like [Amir] Peretz is suitable to put an end to the disgrace."

Block Quotes:

I. "Do Not Stand Idly By"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (April 5): "The Hamas victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council changed not only the diplomatic map of Israeli-Palestinian relations; it also threatens the

Palestinian population, young and old, with a severe humanitarian crisis.... Israel's policy in principle prohibits any contact with the Hamas-led Palestinian government. This attitude leaves some room for maneuvering with regard to maintaining links with Abbas, and with officials in the cabinet ministries (although following Hamas's decision not to establish a national unity government, all the ministers are Hamas people), and with local officials like district governors and mayors. Even the Israel Defense Forces, sovereign in the territories according to international law, interprets the diplomatic directive in such a way that 'no' also can mean 'yes.' For example, the complete severing of ties with local officials might disrupt attempts to extricate Israelis caught in the territories. Danger to human life therefore trumps blacklisting, a rule that should also be brought to bear with regard to innocent Palestinians. Assistance to the Hamas-controlled PA -- certainly not; however neither should we stand idly by in the face of the humanitarian disaster that has fallen on an uninvolved and innocent population. There is also diplomatic wisdom in this. Israel does not want international involvement at a time of crisis, United Nations resolutions or a forced injection of aid through UN and nongovernmental organizations. It would be better for Israel that the war with Hamas not hurt the Palestinian people. The battle is against an organization and a government, not against a people or individuals."

II. "Convergence to a Border of Convenience"

Palestinian affairs correspondent and far-left Palestinian sympathizer Amira Hass opined in Ha'aretz (April 5): "What drew the Jewish Israelis [to the settlements] -- and turned nearly half a million of them into outlaws under international law -- were not the clods of holy land but comfortable lives promised to them by Israeli military supremacy, the spacious inexpensive housing and the improved infrastructure.... The convergence, therefore, is the borders drawn by the average Israeli Jew's aspirations for comfort and convenience. These would be natural ambitions if they did not come at the expense of the Palestinians as individuals and as a people.... The convergence plan, which coagulates the violence of occupation in densely populated Palestinian areas, will bring forth and intensify three types of Palestinian rage: national rage due to the sabotage of the Palestinian project for a state, development and independence; economic rage of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who lost their land, property and livelihood to the Jews who prosper on the other side of the barbed wire; and religious rage, of those who turn for solace to the Koran and Allah, where they can find explanations stating that's the way Jews are. The supporters of convergence and its architects are deceiving themselves by thinking that all these forms of rage won't burst out, or that it will always be possible to suppress them. Indeed, it is difficult to predict when and how the rage will erupt, but sooner or later, they will be back disrupting the dreams of comfort and convenience at the expense of another nation."

III. "The Defense Portfolio -- to Keep in Power"

Conservative columnist and former Director General of the Israel Broadcasting Authority Uri Porat sarcastically wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 5): "The Kadima sages are telling the Labor Party sages, 'The finance portfolio is ours, take the defense portfolio.' Thus, the [Kadima] people believe that they will stay in power.... What can one say? This is a brilliant move -- the right man at the right place at the right time. At last we'll be able to sleep quietly. If this is what the last elections brought forth, it was worthwhile. After it was definitely proved that the mighty Israel Defense Forces isn't worth anything against some insignificant Qassam rocket launchers, there's no doubt that only someone like [Amir] Peretz is suitable to put an end to the disgrace. For instance, he'll be able to sell the air force to the Electric Corporation's trade union and use the money to raise the port workers' minimum wage.... In fact, it will also be possible to do away with the ground forces, because not all soldiers will be needed after the implementation of Kadima's convergence plan."

JONES